



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROD BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

# NEWS

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## **Governor Blagojevich announces return of air service between Chicago and downstate communities of Decatur, Quincy and Marion**

### *Air Midwest begins flights into Midway*

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod R. Blagojevich announced the return of regular air passenger service to Chicago from the Decatur, Quincy and Marion markets. Daily flights to Chicago's Midway airport from the three downstate airports took off today under a deal worked out through the state's I-Fly program. Prior to today's inaugural flights to Midway, the only air service at the three airports was to St. Louis.

"Last Fall, we doubled the number of state sponsored Amtrak trains, and today new flights are taking off. Connecting Chicago and downstate communities will not only help attract businesses to expand and locate in Illinois, but will make it easier for anyone traveling our state," Gov. Blagojevich said.

The air service that started today between Decatur, Quincy and Marion is possible through funding in the I-Fly program. The I-Fly program was created in 2003, but had never been funded until Fiscal Year 2007 when Gov. Blagojevich and members of the General Assembly agreed to include \$1.65 million for the I-Fly program to restore air service between Chicago and these three downstate communities.

Air Midwest, Inc. began initial air service today from Decatur, Quincy and Marion to Chicago's Midway airport. Service includes multiple roundtrips during the week, with one roundtrip on Saturday at Decatur and Marion, and one roundtrip on Saturday and Sunday at Quincy. In addition to the Chicago service, there is also a roundtrip flight each day between Quincy and Kansas City. Air Midwest is using Beech 1900, which are turboprop planes that are capable of carrying 19 passengers per flight.

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The I-Fly program is intended to provide incentives to airlines to begin operations in underserved Illinois airports. The Illinois Department of Transportation is providing grants to the airports in Decatur, Quincy and Marion that will guarantee a certain amount of revenue to Air Midwest for each flight. The local airports will be required to provide a 20 percent match.

The goal of the program is to provide an initial subsidy to bring airlines to underserved airports to initiate service, and then to work cooperatively with the local communities to help the service become self-sufficient. All three airports currently have air service to St. Louis provided by RegionsAir, a federally subsidized service. Air service to Chicago stopped in Quincy during 2003, Decatur in 1999, and Marion has not had any service other than to St. Louis since 1986.